

Jonathan Siegle finelines . . .

The new Hult Center for the Performing Arts is a magnificent structure. As I spent the day of the grand opening crawling through its corridors, interviewing designers and technicians and taking pictures, I grew more impressed with the quality and grand scale of its accomplishment. What chutzpah! To build such a thing in little of Eugene.

Yet all the time a little gong kept ringing in my ear. Where were the local people? Local workers built it. Local artists contributed sculpture and ceramics. But local talent isn't going to use it.

The symphony will play there. And the opera. Perhaps the ballet. But indigenous creative performers will not be showcased in this fine new building. The real acts are from out of town.

What happened is that little of Eugene went out to buy itself a concert hall, a nice hall, to show off Eugene. It wanted a mid-size with a few amenities, not a stripped-down compact. What it got was a full-size luxury model with everything — the centerpiece of a \$26 million downtown project.

As an arts writer, that's a pretty good idea to me. The city wants to improve its image and its accounts, so it builds not an industrial complex or a domed stadium, but a home for the arts. Nice.

Paying for it now, though, is serious business. Justifying it is even more serious. How does one explain to voters and taxpayers that we got this thing which cost a lotta bucks, yet we're gonna give it to, say, ORT to use for free? Nope, we're gonna show 'em that this thing is good for business.

And my little gong rings a little louder.

The City of Eugene and its official newspaper, the Register-Guard have gone out of their way to justify this building as being the heart of urban revitalization and a new economic base for central Lane County.

Phooey. It's a theater, a beautiful theater, a magnificent theater. We built it because enough people believe in the arts to want it.

Bob Davis, who designed the functional parts of the two theaters, told me Eugene was the best client he ever had. Folks just want buildings like this, he told me, for their own sake. "There's no reason to build a hall like this unless people want it."

Try telling that to the public. So, civic leaders throw figures around, tally up imaginary ledgers, and glow with dollar signs in their eyes.

Phooey on them and their accounts and ledgers. It ain't art they're talking up.

What a grand idea, using the arts to attract business. If you're out to build something, why not a theater? Let the world see what culture we got out here in



the trees and the rain.

OK, let's see who's playing this month. Red Skelton'll be here on the 15th. Pat Boone's coming the 19th. The Eugene Symphony got to play last Saturday, but they brought in Marvin Hamlisch as a guest. It goes on.

In order to pay for this great building we must put up with Celebrity Attractions bringing in expensive road shows most of us can't afford to see.

Phooey on Celebrity Attractions.

Thanks to some recent generous contributions, Eugene is more assured its great civic experiment may work. But the arts have always found big-time money for big-time donations. Historically the arts patron has always made it possible for big-time art to exist.

But art is proletarian as well as bourgeois. It is people on the cutting edge who bring us new dimensions, new sounds, new visions. The arts must grow in order to flourish. They must have freedom. They must have a place to express themselves, a place where the rest of us can go to gawk, to marvel, and ultimately express our opinion. We need art. We don't need Marvin Hamlisch.

I love you Hult Center. Yet you're like a Playboy centerfold — just as beautiful, and perhaps just as inaccessible. While you strut and sway at 20 bucks a pop, ORT struggles for its life in a red sea, the Community Center for the Performing Arts (the WOW Hall people) fight to stay alive, the University Art Museum has to close for the summer, KWAX goes through its semi-annual blood ritual "friend raiser" and the library can't buy books.

You're magnificent, world class, I was told repeatedly. We deserve you because we built you without state or federal help. You've brought us international recognition and acclaim.

But that gong won't stop ringing until I see us locals up there strutting our stuff and showing off to the rest of the world that we got something here they got nowhere else and if they want to see it they got to come here to see it.

Who knows? It might be the next Red Skelton.

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24 BIG SCREEN FOOTBALL	25 HAPPY HOUR DURING GAME	26 HAPPY HOUR 4-6	27 Ladies Nite Happy Hour 4-6	28 happy hr. 4-6	22 FRIDAY+4 happy hr. 4-7 ROCK BAND	23 OREGON vs. NOTRE DAME
31 BIG SCREEN FOOTBALL					29 happy hr. 4-7 NU-SHOOS	30 OREGON AT UCLA